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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: WHERE THE CENSUS MEETS DARFUR

REF: KHARTOUM 114

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The UN is deeply concerned about the GNU's ability to conduct a census in Darfur. Rebel groups and IDPs are resisting the census due to a deep distrust of the government in Khartoum and a lack of understanding about the census. Moreover, the Presidency has yet to officially recognize the April 15-30 dates for census enumeration and without a presidential decree, the census cannot take place. The presidency must issue a decree immediately so that critical census preparation activities, such as advocacy campaigns and enumerator training, can begin. END SUMMARY.

MISTRUST MAY LEAD TO NON-PARTICIPATION AND DISRUPTION

2. (SBU) On 29 January UNFPA lead representative Bill Musoke briefed poloff on his recent visit to Darfur during which he examined preparation for the national census. UNFPA is the agency responsible for coordinating the census operation and provides technical support to its undertaking. Musoke, a Ugandan who has been working for UNFPA in Sudan for three months, said that there is a complete lack of knowledge among Darfurians about the census. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) has made no effort to advocate for the census in the North, even though the GNU's 2008 budget sets aside funding for it (reftel). Darfurians naturally mistrust the exercise, said Musoke. They are asking why the government in Khartoum wants to know who they are, where they come from, and how many they are. According to Musoke, 20 percent of the Darfur area has not been mapped due to the inability of government staff to enter areas for security reasons (reftel). [Note: Twenty percent of the area is not indicative of the percentage of Darfurian households that have not yet been mapped. The twenty percent of areas includes IDP camps and rebel areas that cannot safely be accessed, corresponding to over 2 million people. End note.]

3. (SBU) Musoke also fears that rebel leaders will encourage their people not to participate in, or even "disrupt" the census. Musoke suggested that UN civil affairs officers, because they have access to rebel areas and IDP camps, brief rebel leaders and sheikhs in the camps about the census. Musoke explained that if IDPs are willing to participate, UNFPA will train teachers in the camps to function as enumerators.

4. (SBU) In a separate meeting with poloff on 29 January, UNMIS officers who had just returned from Darfur agreed that the lack of a strong information campaign is a major impediment to conducting the census in Darfur. UNMIS officers stated that the CBS office in Darfur plans to undertake census advocacy in Darfur, primarily via the radio, only one week before the census is set to take place (which they deemed inadequate).

VOLATILE AREAS

15. (SBU) Florian Baalcke, UNMIS Field Security Coordination Officer, told polooff on 29 January that camps along the Zalingei Corridor in West Darfur are likely to be the hotspots for any problems related to the census. He mentioned that Kalma Camp in South Darfur, historically the most volatile and unruly of all the camps, could also become a problem. For the time being, however, he said, Kalma Camp is quiet. "If enumerators start in the wrong place, problems will stir up quickly", said Baalcke. "Things can happen [in the camps] at the snap of someone's fingers in Paris or Khartoum" said Baalcke, indicating that IDPs will look for cues from leaders such as Abdelwahid and Minni Minnawi on how to react to kenss enwmerapign. BaAlckg`amsk`noted0tHiur5mmrw`spread"qmhCkLI" bauweEfQQcylpto the Central African Republic during the spring months. Musoke explained that in Uganda, enumerators used the tribal chiefs as a focal point for the enumeration of nomadic households that could not be reached. He said counting the nomadic groups in this way provided "reasonable" results. Musoke said UNFPA plans to bring an Ethiopian census advisor to Sudan to deal specifically with the issue of nomadic groups. [Note: Ethiopia just conducted a national census in 2007. End note.]

NO PRESIDENTIAL DECREE

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17. (SBU) Musoke expressed grave concern over the fact that the Presidency has not yet publicly blessed the dates of April 15-30 for the national census. Until a presidential decree is issued, the April 2008 census date is not definite. Musoke said the decree will "kickstart" many census activities, such as nation-wide advocacy. He also said that Darfur rebel leaders will most likely speak out on whether or not they will participate in the census once a presidential decree has been issued. Both UNFPA (through SRSG Ashraf Qazi) and the CBS (through former Director Awad Hag Ali) have pressed the Presidency (through influential Minister for Presidential Affairs Major General Bakri Salih) on this initiative.

New CBS Director Yassin Abdeen

18. (SBU) Musoke and his Chief Technical Advisor, Herbert Kandeh, said that new CBS Director Abdeen must get up-to-speed on the census. Although he was appointed last week, he has yet to hold a formal meeting with UNFPA staff.

19. (SBU) COMMENT: Census enumeration in Darfur poses a significant challenge to government enumerators and UNFPA. The 20 percent Darfur that cannot be mapped is home to over 2 million people in IDP camps and rebel-controlled areas. It seems likely that rebel leaders will warn their communities against participating in the census due to their deep distrust of the government and lack of understanding on the census - though this could be headed off by a vigorous information campaign. Given the instability and volatility of the IDP camps in Darfur, there is a real possibility that enumeration could lead to violence if not handled carefully. The main obstacle to an effective census at the moment, however, is the lack of a presidential decree, which means that - like the South where there are many technical problems - the major issue is the question of Khartoum's (the NCP) intentions or will to make transformational events like the census and elections actually happen.

FERNANDEZ